

Impact of Education Abroad on  
Career Development:  
Four Community  
College Case Studies

VOLUME II

Martin Tillman, Editor

Compiled by the American Institute  
For Foreign Study



# Introduction

by **William L. Gertz**

**President and CEO**

**American Institute For Foreign Study**

It gives us great pleasure to publish this small volume detailing options for community colleges in the study abroad and career development fields.

While education abroad at the four-year college level continues to increase, despite September 11, the weak dollar and Iraq war, limited attention has been paid to developing study abroad programs at our nation's 1200 community colleges.

This publication presents a number of different models for innovative study abroad and career development programs. It is clear, as the authors state, that rather than mimic their

university counterparts in creating study abroad programs, international educators at the community college level must propose workable, financially feasible "career focused" programs.

We would like to express our sincere thanks to Martin Tillman, a long-time colleague, for pulling together this project.

We wish you good luck in creating much needed study abroad programs for students who do not fit the "Junior Year Abroad" mold.



# Preface

by **Martin Tillman**

**Associate Director, Career Services**

**Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS)**

In this volume, Robert Frost and his community college colleagues, in a series of innovative case studies, illustrate how community colleges are at the forefront of implementing education abroad programs which explicitly meet the vocational and professional goals of their students.

While the absolute numbers of students in these programs remains relatively small, it is at the community college that minority students—and all students from low-income backgrounds—find numerous opportunities increasingly possible. It is at the community college level that educators must creatively integrate the vocational curricula requirements of “career students,” or those studying in vocational programs (e.g., nursing, automotive technology), into the overall design and outcomes of the education abroad program. And to lower or completely eliminate cost as a barrier to participation, educators can also develop strong ties with the private sector or actively seek grant support from the U.S. government. (Noteworthy is the case of Fox Valley Community College and its partnership with GM and Volkswagen.)

It is easy to understand why there is measurable value in the fairly short-cycle duration of the program models cited in this volume. Unlike short-term education abroad programs at four-year institutions, which are often not connected to any concrete professional goals, the programs in this volume are explicitly tied to the career aspirations of students (see the Brookdale Community College case). And finally, in each

case study, the program models are also not stand-alone experiences for faculty; there is often an expectation that the expertise they have gained—as a direct outcome of their role in design and implementation of a particular program—will result in new courses in the curriculum (see the Tidewater Community College case and its NSEP Vietnam Project). It seems there is a ripple effect at play at these institutions; in each instance, the program is such a radical departure from the usual curricula offerings, and the international opportunities for staff, faculty and students are so atypical, that the potential for impacts on many levels on campuses is great.

One thing that also is evident in these case studies is the need for more research—apart from the strong anecdotal evidence—to empirically assess how each education abroad model contributed to student career development.

The challenge for community colleges, as it has always been, is to extend the lessons learned of many successful and proven education abroad programs, to a greater number of institutions around the country. Based on the experiences of the institutions in this volume, the good news is that community colleges are not merely seeking to replicate the overseas program designs and structures of their four-year sister institutions. And they are not satisfied with students going abroad absent any explicit connection to their career goals and aspirations. Perhaps in the case of the community college, in the long run, there is value in quality over quantity.



# Education Abroad and the Career Development of Community College Students: Four Case Studies

by Michael Brennan, Director of International Education,  
Hillsborough Community College District, Tampa, Florida

Robert Frost, Associate Professor of International Education,  
Parkland College, Champaign, Illinois

Emily Hagadorn, Director of the International Center  
Brookdale Community College, New Jersey

Marie Martin, Ph.D., Associate Dean of International Studies  
Fox Valley Technical College, Appleton, Wisconsin

Jeanne Natali, Ph.D., Coordinator of International Programs  
Tidewater Community College, Virginia

## Introduction

Community colleges have made vast gains in the international programming they offer students. In the past decade, international student enrollments grew more than 57 percent before declining appreciably in 2003-04 (Institute of International Education [IIE], 2004). Colleges, with the ongoing support of the American Association of Community Colleges (AACCC), now actively recruit international students, as these students bring an international dimension to historically local classrooms, and they represent an increasingly important funding stream separate from state and local taxes. Unfortunately, study abroad programs do not attract the same level of interest at community colleges, and funding is only part of the problem. With the exception of a handful of institutions, colleges invest few dollars in study abroad, assign few staff members to advise students and coordinate programs, and this results in very limited program and academic content offerings by most of the nation's 1,200 community colleges. But does this mean community colleges are not developing international, experiential learning activities for their students?

Quite the contrary, community colleges are developing novel, and highly prescriptive means by which to support students' career development objectives at the earliest stages of their higher education experience. This paper details some of the distinctions today in study abroad programming for community college students, based on the principle that career planning and development should be a key component of any community college study abroad experience.

## Background

For the community college as an institution, its job since the 1940s has been to educate community residents to be informed and responsible citizens in a democratic, and

increasingly international, society (for more on this topic, see Zook, 1947). For faculty in these colleges, their role has been to prepare students for the above and, since the 1970s, to focus increasingly on the development of both critical thinking and vocational skills, in order to support a healthy work life. But for many community college students, their educational plan is simple: develop the necessary skills to gain meaningful employment and or make more money. Community college students consistently identify the desire to gain employment, and increase their income, as the two top reasons for attending a community college (Laanan, 2000). As a result, such a plan challenges faculty who have broader interests for students' learning experience, as the plan often does not include degree intentions, or a set period for international study. In fact, many community college students do not intend to complete an associate's degree at all, as they either work toward a qualifying certificate in their field, or cite their primary motivation as wanting to "get a better job" (Laanan, 2002, p. 27).

Thus, it is unfortunate that almost all of the measures of student success, or even participation, today count degree achievement as the base measure. Practitioners and researchers conclude, based on yearly IIE's annual *Open Doors* research, that small numbers of community college students even go abroad. Given the definition applied to the survey, that only includes students studying abroad for academic credit, this should come as no surprise. In early 2005, an informal SECUSSAnet survey found that the 18 colleges responding sent nearly 3,000 students overseas, but this survey did not ask if academic credit was awarded (Bailey, 2005). As a result, the IIE instrument discounts the volunteer nursing programs that go to Mexico, Ecuador and the Caribbean each year, or the community-based volunteer sanitation, literacy, and other projects that happen through

community college international education offices, as well as the many community-based programs that community colleges offer. While they may not be “academic,” certainly the colleges and the students consider them educational, and career-enhancing, programs.

Even so, *applied* credit programs are why more than 26 percent of community college study abroad students do so in Latin America, compared with only 15 percent of their university counterparts, even as their percentages were almost identical to Europe (IIE, 2004). Latin America is a destination that not only offers considerable professional field experience opportunities, but Spanish is a language most community college students see as directly applicable to their two goals identified above. Thus, community college students are making career and professional development decisions in the study abroad programs they select, and community colleges are orienting programs to the needs of their student and community population. Because these programs offer little time to “soak up” culture, as a semester-length program would, no sustainable effort has been made to measure participation or their value.

### Method

In response to the above, this paper reviews four highly successful “cases” where community colleges have designed programs, harnessed funding, and addressed students’ career needs via short-term study programs. Following the cases, conclusions are drawn to aid college study abroad practitioners, college leaders, and policy makers. This paper considers the current vocational and career issues that both college personnel and students face, identifies how current study abroad programs respond to the unique features of the community college and its students, and offers recommendations and conclusions for college leaders and policy makers. It does so through a presentation of literature that reviews the current community college learning paradigm and related student-community issues. The four programs are discussed in a descriptive case study format outlining the diverse components contributing to the success of each program (for more on descriptive case studies, see Yin, 2003). Each program design is based on how the college or consortia sought to meet students’ career needs based on the community college learning paradigm.

### The Community College Learning Paradigm

Community college practitioners commonly describe the past 15 years of community college history as including three big changes that result in a new institutional paradigm. These include the concepts of the Learning College; New Vocationalism, and; the Entrepreneurial College. The learning college concept was proposed in the mid 1990s and prioritizes the work of every college employee toward increased student learning. No longer “teaching institutions,” teachers become facilitators and administrators look at each problem and ask, “how can this be solved in a way that enhances stu-

dent learning?” (O’Banion, 1997). The college, as a learning organization, works to create substantive change in the individual learner (PBS, 2002). New vocationalism implies a shift from traditional vocational and career training to lifelong workforce development, where credit courses, training, and other forms of instruction are revised continuously to meet economic development needs as well as those of the citizen-student-worker (Bragg, 2001). Along these same lines, the “entrepreneurial college” concept is a continuation of the trend toward seeking alternative funding sources as public funds decline. These sources include contract training and other for-profit educational endeavors, establishment of college foundations, and private building campaigns. While such entrepreneurial efforts have tremendous benefits, there are also pitfalls such as the divisions within programs based on profitability or service, and the extra attention for-profit activities receive contrasted with traditional service areas (Grubb, 1997).

The aforementioned provides background to understand the environment study abroad programs face on community college campuses. This new paradigm of a learning centered college, focused on lifelong employment, with increasing orientation to seeking new funding sources, provides both a rationale for career-focused study abroad programs, and also poses high hurdles over which international educators must leap. Combined with this institutional paradigm are the primary motivations for offering study abroad programs at community colleges:

- Meet the learning needs of current community college students.
- Provide intercultural professional development opportunities to faculty.
- Help communities develop global awareness and experience.

While faculty develop study abroad programs with intercultural learning, language goals, and career skills development in mind, students may not see the inter-related nature of these goals. As stated above, most community college students base their coursework decisions on a few clear questions:

Will it help me get a (better) job?

Can I afford it?

Beyond these first two questions, other questions vary based on ethnicity, income level, and family influence. However, based on research by Laanan and Boyer, and data from the National Center on Education Statistics (NCES), we do know that financial aid may be the most critical factor in determining how students select educational offerings at community colleges; students from more collectivist cultures (family or group-centered, as opposed to the individual) are more likely to be influenced by their parents’ experience or recommendations; and that some groups’ career interests are

influenced by service and volunteer opportunities (Boyer, 1993; Laanan, 2000; NCES, 1999). All of these factors can play a role in the design of college and consortia education abroad programs as we prioritize how to meet students' learning and career interests. One of the key features noted in the case studies that follow is how funding issues were considered and addressed well in advance of the program being advertised, and as a result, recruitment was of minor concern. This allowed for much stronger planning of the academic and vocational aspects of each program.

### **The Problem: Program Design**

The problem for the program designer, based on the above, is that the vocational community college student is not shopping for a vacation, an experience, a course she needs, or perhaps even a vague learning opportunity. She is shopping primarily for an affordable way to gain qualifying, or new skills, to increase her job prospects in an increasingly competitive economy. No matter how the program is packaged, or how much the student wishes to travel, community college study programs must relate to this reality. This does not mean that study abroad is a remote prospect for community college students. It does mean that vocationally-oriented programs today must be much more prescriptive in how they meet students' learning objectives. For example, both small rural colleges as well as large urban colleges must be able to:

1. Harness financial aid resources professionally and efficiently to support students' study abroad applications
2. Design programs that promise instruction in specific skills sets
3. Orient faculty workloads to allow for orientations, supervising program internships, re-entry, and then assistance in targeted job searches
4. Develop program curricula that meets specific professional needs, whether they be social/language skill sets, applied scientific or mathematical assignments, "clinical" shadowing or similar human service functions, as well as the intercultural experiences that combine with the above.

The four priorities above introduce the four cases to be profiled below. This foundation avoids the repetition typical in multisite descriptive case studies and allows the reader to base each presentation on strong programmatic assumptions.

### **The Troika Model**

The first case presented was developed through Community Colleges for International Development, or CCID, with the express purpose of providing community college students, and its member colleges, international career programming. Called the "Troika" program, because of its distinct "leadership of three" approach, it combines program components that serve students, provide professional development opportunities to faculty and promote partnerships to sustain international study linkages. Currently there are 13 college part-

ners in the operation of four study programs. What makes troika unique is the degree of college leadership required in accepting the partner role, the level of financial commitment each institution must make, and the consortium's role in coordinating program development, delivery and evaluation.

Troika study programs developed thus far send students to Europe and Latin America to study agriculture, sustainable energy, international marketing, or nursing. All require the completion of academic credit and last two to three weeks. To be considered a troika program, the programs must:

1. Relate to community college students' career interests
2. Offer significant opportunities for faculty professional development, and
3. Combine intercultural experiences with field-of-study specific, applied learning or internship activities. In some cases, CCID partners with the non-profit organization, Youth for Understanding (YFU), to offer a family home-stay component.

As a result, each troika program is built around the practical, career interests of students, the professional development interests of faculty, and can be designed to meet other general education needs of the typical undergraduate student. Troika programs are short-term by nature, as this fits the student profile. Because programs are in the host country on a short-term basis, lead colleges deliver pre-program instruction and orientation using WebCT and Blackboard.

Faculty development is central to the troika model's success and impact. Faculty take turns serving as "lead" instructor. This rotation feature demands regular faculty-to-faculty communication on pre-program instruction and orientation, and day-to-day program content and curriculum. The year before serving as the "lead" instructor, faculty serve on-program as the "shadow" faculty member to assist with instruction, evaluate the experience and ensure a smooth transition in the year ahead. Since multiple colleges are invested in a single effort, the shortcomings normally associated with faculty-led, group programs are minimized. Losing one key faculty member or coming up short on student recruitment at one college, for example, does not require canceling the program.

Recruitment in the troika programs is also unique. Because programs are defined by career program areas, there is a well-defined student group with close ties to the faculty who lead the program. Secondly, troika programs require each of the three lead partners to recruit a minimum of four students for the program. To ensure that a minimum of 12 students is guaranteed, troika college presidents raise scholarships for their students (minimum of four \$750 awards) and direct their faculty to develop a credit course linked to program content so that students pay in-state tuition and register at their home institution.

CCID provides a website with program updates, helps with group insurance, travel arrangements and other logistics. Each college, therefore, takes on specific, and limited, responsibilities for the program. Leaders meet by conference call every three to six weeks in the eight months leading up to a program, and because the consortium includes more than 75 members with college presidents who take an active interest, results can be monitored closely, and quality improvements made from year to year.

The troika concept is new; it was launched in summer, 2004. With just one full cycle of programs complete, and more than 50 students and eight faculty members involved, troika looks like a positive and affordable step for community colleges to help students gain valuable career insights through international experiences. Given the success of the first programs, CCID anticipates meeting its original goal of establishing more than 30 troika programs among its members by 2010.

### **Fox Valley Technical College: International Professional Field Study Course**

Since Fox Valley Technical College (FVTC) added to its mission a commitment for preparing students to work in a globally influenced workplace, international professional field study has been expanded in various programs, such as marketing, accounting, automotive technician, culinary arts, childcare, nursing, occupational therapy assistant, truck driving, and electromechanical programs. The motivation for sending students abroad came out of business and industry surveys that recommended the college provide training that would both help students learn about their professional field in an international environment, as well as gain experience in working with people from different cultures.

To create the most value for its students, FVTC started offering the International Professional Field Study (IPFS) as a three-credit hour course. This course consists of a reciprocal exchange where students and faculty from the U.S. and abroad host each other in their homes and workplaces. As part of this course, students also learn the fundamentals of a foreign language spoken in the country they are visiting and gain cultural knowledge and understanding of values and behaviors in a different society and workplace. Country briefings and cross-cultural orientations offered on the home campus are another important part of this course. Upon completion of an IPFS course, students are able to incorporate a global perspective into a comparison of professional and social practices in the U.S. and the country visited.

The course focuses on three training areas: academic, professional, and cultural, offered in equal portions. While abroad, students attend classes in their technical field, participating in instructor-guided discussions and activities. They visit businesses related to their profession, where they spend several days shadowing their hosting student. For example,

automotive program students in Germany visit auto dealerships and Volkswagen training facilities. Nursing and occupational therapy students in the Netherlands visit hospitals and various community clinics, and culinary arts students work in bakeries, restaurants and hotel catering businesses.

Students acquire cultural education from host families, observe day-to-day living, attend language classes and participate in cultural sightseeing trips. Upon their return home, students make presentations on their international learning experience to the entire program class, thus educating other students about the academic and work environment in another country. This activity helps career students understand and relate their fields from non-U.S. perspectives, and recruit new students for a program the following year. Students report that as a result of an IPFS course abroad, their professional and academic knowledge increased, while their cultural learning was described as invaluable; their overall experience was "life changing and unforgettable." Students also reported that such study abroad affected their employment in a positive way. Employers reported greater interest in learning about the student's/employee's international experiences, which helped to establish a better informal rapport with supervisors and co-workers. Since this is a very young program, it is too early to report how such training eventually impacts job growth or promotion.

The IPFS courses are led by instructors who design questions for investigation during the field studies, a final assignment, and grading parameters. Just as it is for students, for many instructors such a field study may be their first trip abroad. The FVTC International Studies department provides training for instructors leading a course abroad, addressing such issues as safety, cultural differences, culture shock, geography, history, demographics and political environment in a given country. To make a course abroad more attractive for instructors, in addition to compensation for teaching, FVTC offers instructors credit for professional development required for all faculty and their supervisors as part of their employment in the Wisconsin Technical College System. FVTC also shows its commitment to international education by allocating funding to the International Studies department, whose staff is dedicated to providing services to students, faculty and staff, and to organizing such international programs. Like the other college cases cited in this paper, faculty development goes hand-in-hand with student career development in study abroad.

For vocational students at FVTC, the major obstacle to study abroad is funding. Financial aid is available to them, but it is also challenging to get time off work and away from family responsibilities. FVTC looks for ways to help students fund international field studies by allocating scholarships and seeking grant opportunities. One specific field study in

an automotive technician program has been awarded funding by FIPSE (Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education) for six colleges, three in the United States and three in Europe (Germany, the United Kingdom, Portugal), to participate in international exchanges and develop new internationalized curriculum in the automotive program. The faculty members have designed a project with the lifestyles and limitations of the technical college student in mind to maximize the international influence for all students.

The Transatlantic Automotive Technology (TransAutoTEC) project recognized the fact that international experiences for vocational students are effective when incorporating a variety of instructional resources to introduce new concepts. Appreciation for another culture or industry in a different country can be learned and experienced through methods other than those available in a traditional study abroad program. FVTC faculty found that creative international experiences, which may appear minimal by comparison to semester or yearlong foreign travel, may be life changing for students who frequently have not ventured far from their Midwestern hometown. Moreover, the experience has even more relevancy as it is linked to their occupational learning with the faculty modeling the language and culture learning along with the students.

The FVTC college climate also has been enriched by the international opportunities offered by the TransAutoTEC Project and related activities. In 2004 this project received the IIE Andrew Heiskell Award due to its innovative approach to building an international dimension of study into the traditional vocational curriculum of automotive technology. Using Web-based technologies, students and faculty in three U.S. community/technical colleges linked with the GM Automotive Service Educational Program (ASEP) teach and collaborate with European apprentice students and faculty linked with the Volkswagen Corporation. Faculty in partner colleges synchronized the instruction of selected units using common Web-based multimedia learning resources. This created a virtual transatlantic classroom with internationally integrated peer-based learning opportunities. Advanced digital technologies, including remote video/audio connections, 3D, and animation, as well as chat rooms and email, are used to enhance learning and build relationships in an international context. Subsequently, transatlantic student and faculty exchanges reinforced the technology-enabled relationships, promoted cultural experiences, and continued the collaborative learning in automotive technology. This project united the practice of transatlantic exchanges and distance learning to establish an international dimension often not available in this field of vocational education.

The overall learning outcomes of this project were for students to understand some of the similarities and differences of the American and European automobile industry while essentially learning the same technical content. These experiences enhanced international work skills of all students with more intensive learning opportunities for the mobile students participating in the actual exchange. The non-mobile students, who were not able to take time away from family and work responsibilities, benefited from the international peer-based learning made possible via technology, as well as through working with visiting exchange students and with their college classmates upon their return from the international experience. This purposeful integration of international concepts into the learning experience of both mobile and non-mobile students removed barriers to international education often encountered by adult students with limitations to participation in extended exchange activities due to financial and family responsibilities.

For the TransAutoTEC mobile students, the exchange experience was an intense month of activities, including staying with a host family and linking with another automotive student in the classroom and the workplace. Another unique aspect of the TransAutoTEC Project was the Global Automotive Symposium that occurred as the European students visited the U.S. campuses. The Symposium in Detroit brought together the visiting students and faculty from Germany, Portugal and England with associate degree automotive students from colleges in Wisconsin, Illinois and Michigan. Sponsored by General Motors, the group visited automotive related sites to learn together about the U.S. automotive industry. The U.S. student participants in the symposium were those planning an exchange to Europe later that spring as well as their classroom peers who were not participating in the exchange. Additionally, the students had the opportunity to prepare for the cross-cultural and language challenges of the IPFS course.

Partnerships with private corporations like Volkswagen and General Motors enhanced the resources available to the faculty to create a new course entitled "Global Automotive Market." The new course established a permanent credit vehicle for integrating international learning about the automotive industry into the associate degree program. As a result, the TransAutoTEC project strengthened the internationalization of vocational activities and perspectives on campus while providing foundation and rationale for the more academic components of international study focused on language and culture. This project also has served as a model for internationalization of other technical programs to prepare students for working in a global economy.

### **The EC-U.S. Recipe for Success: International Vocational Curriculum Development**

In 2003, Brookdale Community College (NJ) received a \$204,000 grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) to develop an international hospitality industry curriculum. A European Commission/United States Cooperation FIPSE Program sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, this three-year grant project involves partnerships with Baltimore City Community College (MD), Nassau Community College, (NY), and institutions of higher education in France, the Netherlands, and Scotland. Because Brookdale is in the early phase of implementation, this case will present the rationale behind a successful FIPSE proposal for one community college and partners, present the learning outcomes anticipated for career culinary arts students, and share some early results.

The genesis of this international vocational initiative resulted from a desire among the partnering institutions to foster global competencies among culinary arts and hospitality management students that would make them more competitive in the workforce upon graduation. The components of the three-year FIPSE grant include: transatlantic faculty exchanges; development of new international curricula with shared components among partners; articulation of hospitality courses between the U.S. and European partners; credit-bearing transatlantic student exchanges for study abroad and work experience (ranging from one to three months in duration); foreign language and intercultural training for exchange students; assessment of grant outcomes; and developing the means to sustain the program once the grant ends.

#### **Rationale for Applying for a FIPSE International Program Grant**

A FIPSE International Program grant was an ideal vehicle to promote global competence among hospitality students through the aforementioned activities for the following reasons:

1. Faculty exchanges as well as curriculum development are required and funded by the grant. These exchanges enable U.S. and European professors to share different approaches to pedagogy, curriculum development, internship programs, and student assessment. Faculty observe hospitality equipment and facilities abroad while they experience the unique culinary traditions found in each college's respective geographic region. Through this professional development experience, faculty return to their home campus with new capabilities to: implement new approaches to existing courses; determine how to articulate courses abroad to the home curriculum; develop new international curricula; speak to students with authority about the intercultural and linguistic challenges of the program; and articulate the academic, personal, and professional benefits of an international experience to their students.

2. Lack of sufficient funding commonly prevents vocational students from participating in international programs. Because student mobility is a key component of the FIPSE program, the majority, if not all, of the selected students' costs to study or complete an internship abroad are covered by grant funding.
3. FIPSE requires students to gain intercultural and foreign language competence. As a result, the grant awards language training stipends for exchange students.
4. The grant affords students unable to go abroad many on-campus benefits from the program: through a newly internationalized curriculum; reports from faculty and students who go abroad; interaction with European students through distance education; and exposure to visiting European hospitality students in the classroom.
5. Development of a new international curriculum (that will continue after the grant ends) is one of the most effective means of sustaining the project's goals.
6. Partnership among a minimum of three U.S. institutions (each from a different U.S. state) as well as three European institutions (each from a different European Union member state) as required by the grant, enables resources and knowledge to be shared in many ways: for classroom and on-line curriculum development; web and print recruitment materials; intercultural and language training; internship sites; and appropriate student support services (visa processing, pre-departure orientation, and development of an emergency response protocol).
7. Furthermore, the partnership creates a larger network of participating faculty and students and brings a greater variety of new cross-cultural experiences to campuses.

#### **Student Learning Outcomes**

Students who participate in the project are expected to:

- Obtain an understanding of European culinary and hospitality traditions and techniques in the classroom and through international internships and improve their career skills and knowledge as a result of this knowledge
- Obtain an understanding of non-U.S. cultural values and communication styles and increased cultural self-awareness
- Demonstrate understanding of the process of cultural adaptation
- Gain knowledge of non-U.S. political, historical, and cultural contexts
- Evaluate cultural differences with empathy in a variety of settings (academic/professional/personal)
- Practice critical thinking to navigate through and succeed in a study abroad environment

- Demonstrate increased proficiency in a foreign language (French and Dutch)
- Apply intercultural skills, personal development skills, and cultural knowledge to other environments, such as the workplace, upon graduation.

One culinary student's experience of working in a four-star hotel in Holland during summer, 2004 was a testament to these outcomes. Although the student originally had intended to become a chef, he decided that because he enjoyed working with people during his internship, he would now prefer to be a hotel manager. This would enable him to control aspects of the hotel restaurant while also being responsible for many other areas of hotel operations. As for intercultural skills, the student stated, "I appreciate new cultures more now. When I see someone in the U.S. struggling with the language or to just fit in, I have more patience for that person now because I understand what they're going through."

Although it is premature to assess the long-term anticipated outcomes of the grant project, initial response to the program from faculty, students, and the hospitality industry is very positive. Faculty participating in exchanges return to the classroom full of enthusiasm for international education and the desire to implement new ideas from Europe into their curriculum, including development of new courses. U.S. students warmly embrace European faculty as guest lecturers in the U.S. classrooms and express great interest in completing a study abroad or internship experience in Europe. Finally, local restaurants and hotels demonstrate their support for this initiative by agreeing to host a European intern, or look favorably upon graduates from the international hospitality program. For example, culinary students with international internship experience mention that employers are very curious about this experience during employment interviews, so much so that it positively differentiated these students from other candidates and thus helped them secure employment.

FIPSE programs, while highly specialized and offering opportunities to relatively small numbers of students, nevertheless provide important benefits previously unseen in community college study abroad programming. First, they offer short-term intensive cultural immersion experiences. Second, they connect apprentice students with master practitioners in a cross-cultural learning environment. Third, they provide new qualifications and increase the ability of career program graduates to team with diverse work groups. Finally, they do all this in similar fashion with the college faculty who participate as both teachers and learners in the experience.

### **Tidewater Community College and Mid Atlantic Consortium: NSEP Vietnam Project**

In 1999 Tidewater Community College, in an effort to unify faculty, student, and mission interests, sought a new approach to study abroad that would provide opportunities for the college community to gain significant intercultural skills. College funding for a program of this nature was out of the question. In the past, international programming since the 1980s had included assistance to more than 55 faculty to pursue international projects, and support for two traditional study abroad programs based in France and Costa Rica. While students and faculty had received ongoing support for these efforts, college leaders recognized that almost all the efforts seemed to point toward Europe. After reviewing various federally funded international education programs, the college successfully requested funding from the National Security Education Program (NSEP).

#### **Background**

The NSEP Vietnam Project began in 2000, with an overall goal of building a critical mass of scholarship about Vietnam among eight Mid-Atlantic community colleges. The program combined formal classroom instruction, informal seminars, and travel to Vietnam to give students and faculty a thorough understanding of Vietnam and the developing world. It was hoped students would gain valuable academic and intercultural skills that would benefit them in their future academic and career goals and beyond. Faculty participated closely with students, serving as teachers and mentors in each phase of the program.

Faculty and student seminars were held throughout each phase of the program. The project began with a two-week curriculum development seminar for 20 faculty from the consortium colleges. Vietnam experts from a wide range of academic disciplines and local business people who have commercial transactions with Vietnam conducted the seminars and provided feedback to participating faculty. As a result of these seminars, twenty new curriculum modules were developed. These teaching modules were infused into the faculty members' courses at their home institutions, and continue to be taught, multiplying the impact of the grant each semester. Student seminars were held at several points in the program. In early seminars, program staff assessed students' expectations and needs so they could tailor program activities to meet them. Later seminars prepared students for travel in the developing world. Students also participated in team building exercises and other activities designed to build a cohesive group that would succeed in the upcoming study abroad experience.

In the pre-travel phase of the program, students joined their faculty counterparts in the classroom to study two years of Vietnamese language taught by distance learning. The instructor was based at one participating college and broadcast the language course to five of the eight participating colleges. Faculty served as mentors to students in the difficult task of studying a less commonly taught language by distance learning. Students and faculty were required to participate in language instruction before travel, with all students earning at least six credits in Vietnamese language.

Participating faculty also collaborated to develop a three-credit, interdisciplinary class, *Introduction to Vietnam*, which was first taught using distance learning technology to participating students. Faculty used the expertise they gained in the introductory seminars to develop a course which approached the study of Vietnam from a variety of disciplines, including the humanities, social sciences, health professions, geography, and business. The course has now been developed into an online course and is taught each semester, again multiplying the impact of the program.

The study abroad portion of the program was the final phase of the program. Faculty served as mentors to students, many of whom had never traveled outside the United States. The program contained a variety of activities designed to build the academic and intercultural skills of students and faculty. The program began at Hong Duc University in rural Thanh Hoa Province, where participants collaborated with Hong Duc's students and faculty to exchange academic and cultural information. Participating faculty taught English in Hong Duc's classrooms while students assisted their Vietnamese counterparts in the classroom. Students also were assigned to shadow HDU students to get a first-hand understanding of the lives of the Vietnamese college students. Hong Duc's English language and hospitality studies students seized the opportunity to interact with native English-speaking students, spending every minute possible practicing their language skills. This interchange between students and their Vietnamese counterparts created a rich environment for intercultural learning. Consortium students reported this phase of the trip to be the most difficult and also the most rewarding.

At the conclusion of the HDU phase of the study abroad, students and faculty visited historical and cultural sites from Hanoi to Ho Chi Minh City, meeting local experts who provided historical information, tours and lectures, which put each site in an academic and historical framework. Finally, students and faculty visited Phu Mai Orphanage in Ho Chi Minh City, which had received substantial financial and volunteer support from one of the seminar leaders whom students had worked with while still on campus. The group spent the day at the facility and experienced the provision of care for severely disabled orphans in Vietnam.

## **Benefits to Program Participants**

The NSEP Vietnam Project was a unique faculty and student opportunity for several reasons. First, the faculty/student relationship was unique. The program did not assign students and faculty to their traditional roles of teachers and students. Instead, faculty and students worked together in a learning community. Faculty gained academic expertise in Vietnam studies, and then worked with students as facilitators to transfer this knowledge as students built on their own expertise. Students were then given the opportunity to share their newly acquired knowledge with faculty mentors across the program using distance learning technology. Faculty and students also studied the Vietnamese language together, giving faculty the opportunity to model for students the academic skills needed to study a difficult, less commonly taught language. This model, where faculty facilitated student learning and students participated with their faculty mentors, was ideal for both faculty professional development and student learning.

Second, the project provided faculty with a sustained opportunity for international professional development. During the early stages of the program, faculty had access to major figures in Vietnam studies, business, and aid organizations. Faculty gained a considerable background in Vietnamese studies, but they also used this opportunity to develop specific areas of academic interest. Further, faculty used these links and the contacts they made in Vietnam to develop mutually beneficial international projects of their own.

However, it was the students who gained the most from their participation in the program. Like their faculty mentors, students gained a general background understanding of Vietnam studies, and then delved more deeply into their own areas of interest. The result was that students with academic majors as diverse as public health administration, business, international studies, and theater developed personal interests in these varied areas. The most tangible results came from students' three-week cultural immersion in Vietnam. They were able to practice their language skills at Hong Duc University, in local markets, and with the people they met. Students grew dramatically from the time the group left the United States to the time they returned. Upon their return, students noted the personal satisfaction they felt overcoming their own fears and reservations to immerse themselves in the Vietnamese culture. These same students reported in interviews, conducted two years after their return, that they had gained specific academic, social, cultural, and personal skills of long-term benefit.

Students reported that their participation in the project helped them to refine career choices, better understand their chosen career fields, and make future decisions with more confidence. For example, one student knew prior to his participation in the program that he would major in international studies because he had a general interest in international affairs. After returning from Vietnam, he chose to

minor in Asian studies, and is now living and working in Taiwan. He credits his participation in the program with helping him pursue an interest in depth, and helping him to find a meaningful career path. Another student participated in the program as she was completing a degree in public health administration. Because she had never traveled outside of Western Europe, she could not fully understand the health issues that immigrants from developing countries faced once they arrived in the United States. After studying health issues in Vietnam and experiencing the conditions in the country, she reports she now has a much clearer understanding of her career field. Finally, another student reported that his participation helped him to redefine the goals that he set for himself. Following the study abroad program, he felt more confident in his personal abilities, so much that he raised his own expectations of himself. The program had clearly a profound impact on many of the student participants.

As one might imagine, a program this complex could not possibly be available without significant external funding. Because the program was completely funded by NSEP, most commonly faced funding issues were solved in the planning stages of the program. As a result, program staff had little concern about recruitment, and the threat of program cancellation. Program staff were able to focus on the academic aspects of the program throughout the project's timeline. All costs associated with the professional development seminars were paid by grant funds, including two week-long curriculum development seminars and a weekend retreat for all participants. Further, one faculty project associate was paid a small stipend to facilitate their college's participation in the project. A second major cost of this project was associated with the distributed teaching of the Vietnamese language and humanities courses. The grant paid the language instructor, which assured college approval for running language courses at smaller than required enrollments. To ensure the smooth distribution of the classes, the grant also paid for a technology assistant in each classroom so that problems could be addressed immediately and students would not lose instructional time because of technical difficulties. Finally, and equally important, the grant paid for the three-week study abroad program, which would have been prohibitively expensive without grant funds.

The NSEP Project's influence on the colleges' internationalization priorities is unmistakable, and has contributed significantly to the internationalization of Tidewater Community College and its seven partner colleges. Faculty and students were afforded an immersion experience that would never have been available without NSEP funds. The faculty who participated and developed teaching modules continue to teach from the materials they produced during the project. These teaching modules are also available as reference material for any faculty who need instructional materials on a

variety of Vietnam studies topics. Finally, the course that was developed from the critical mass of scholarship on Vietnam, *An Introduction to Vietnam*, continues to be taught to approximately 75 students each year, further integrating the study of Vietnam into the regular curriculum.

### Summary and Recommendations

The four cases presented in this paper highlight the unique ways community colleges are creating international career and professional development opportunities for their students. While each is exemplary, many colleges already join similar partnerships and consortia to deliver offerings relevant to students' career needs. Both the Troika and the Tidewater models harness the strength of multiple partnerships to build security and depth to their program offerings, while the Brookdale and Fox Valley programs harnessed FIPSE funding to create specialized international career programs. As these cases were finalized, several important recommendations emerged from the presentations. They are listed below.

1. Funding pools must be expanded specifically for community college students to complete applied study programs abroad. College foundations, organizations like IIE, as well as government sponsored programs like NSEP and FIPSE, play a vital role in designating such funding categories. The above cases, two of them award winners, shows the benefits of targeted funding to increasing community college international career programs.
2. State higher education officials need to support grant categories that combine college faculty professional development activities with development of study abroad programs. Programs receiving funds could be required to open their programs to statewide applicants, thus paving the way for improved statewide cooperation.
3. States, funding agencies and consortia should expand funding for programs that offer two-way educational exchanges. Particularly for community colleges, these benefit the many students who cannot afford to travel. Also, it incorporates a "share America" component during an important time in U.S. foreign relations.
4. Colleges must develop programs based on students' career interests and academic needs. Seventy percent of all community college students participate in short-term study abroad programs. At the same time, many of these students are not studying a foreign language, thus, programs must be prescriptive in their application to student career development in both their organization and delivery of curricula.

5. Based on the above cases, colleges can maintain multiple partnerships and memberships to meet the diverse needs of community college students. AIFS, CCIS, state study abroad organizations, and targeted career partnerships can thrive in co-existence, and more students will reap the career benefits of international study.
6. Service and experiential learning activities are necessary components in community college short-term study abroad programs in order for students to integrate intercultural skills development with career knowledge.
7. Online communications before and after the international component can redefine and reconfigure international learning within a technical or community college program curriculum. It appears the study abroad programs in each of the four cases cited in the paper inspired significant internationalization of vocational curricula.
8. As Fox Valley showed, not all students involved in an international learning experience need to go abroad. By requiring students to report back within their programs, building in a program-wide symposium, and expanding student learning exchanges to online projects, many can learn from the intercultural experiences of a few.
9. As the four colleges showed, faculty inclusion and compensation, and student supervision, are issues which can be addressed through development of an integrated study course in which all students enroll. Specialized readings, internships, excursions, and even assignments can be built around this core course.
10. It is important to designate college officials who can effectively influence international education policy at the state and national levels. Such leadership is essential to successful advocacy of international education into other college curriculum and workforce issues.
11. Finally, colleges should assess student learning outcomes in study programs based on how they relate to future employment and community workforce development, and integrate these assessments into ongoing program-wide assessments.

### Conclusions

The above cases and recommendations illustrate how community colleges are not merely mimicking their university counterparts in the study abroad programs they offer. Quite the contrary, despite limited funding and staff, international educators are designing “career-focused” study programs that fit their constituents’ career and workforce development needs in consideration of how the study program will affect their qualifications for future employment and their successful participation in community life. Rather than reject the

short-term format as nonacademic, community and technical colleges have applied new technologies and creative partnerships to offer programs worthy of their students’ time. In many ways, this creativity mirrors the innovative programs and services colleges have designed and improved upon for over 100 years—always with a focus on students’ civic participation and career development.

### References

- Bailey, R. (January, 2005) SECUSS-L and SECUSSCC NAFSA: Association of International Educators listserv survey results on community college study abroad programming. Shared by means of listserv. Email R. Frost for copy at rfrost@parkland.edu.
- Boyer, N. (1993). *Vietnamese choice of majors at Golden West College*. Huntington Beach, CA: Golden West College. (ED 365 385).
- Bragg, D.D. (2001) *Opportunities and challenges for the new vocationalism in American community colleges*. New Directions for Community Colleges, no. 115, Fall 2001. John Wiley, and Sons, Inc.
- Community Colleges for International Development (CCID). [www.ccidinc.org](http://www.ccidinc.org)
- Grubb, W.N., and others. (1997). *Workforce, economic and community development: The changing landscape of the entrepreneurial community college*. Berkeley: National Center for Research in Vocational Education, The University of California.
- Institute of International Education. (2004). *Open Doors: 2004*. Retrieved from website on January 10, 2004, <http://www.iie.org>.
- Laanan, F.S. (2000). *Community college students’ career and educational goals*. New Directions for Community Colleges, no. 112, Winter, 2000. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. 19-33.
- O’Banion, T. (1997). *A learning college for the 21st century*. Phoenix: Oryx Press.
- PBS Adult Learning Service. (2002). *Creating a learning college*. [www.pbs.org/als/revolution/whatis/principles.htm](http://www.pbs.org/als/revolution/whatis/principles.htm).
- National Center for Education Statistics. (1999). *Integrated postsecondary education data system (IPEDS) completions survey*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education.
- Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Zook, G. (1947). *The President’s commission on higher education: Higher education for American democracy*.





# American Institute For Foreign Study, Inc.

Founded in 1964, the American Institute For Foreign Study and its family of companies organize educational and cultural exchange programs throughout the world for more than 40,000 students and young people each year.

Program include College study abroad, Summer Institute for the Gifted, ACIS High School, Au Pair in America, Camp America, Cultural Insurance Services International and Academic Year in America.

## **AIFS College Division Study Abroad**

In affiliation with 20 universities in 12 countries, AIFS organizes study abroad programs for more than 5,000 American students during the academic year and summer. AIFS works closely with 500 American colleges and universities, providing

students and faculty with high quality educational experiences abroad.

For a complete list of programs, see [www.aifsabroad.com](http://www.aifsabroad.com).

## **Partnership Programs**

AIFS also arranges study abroad programs for 80 American universities and colleges on a partnership basis providing housing, transportation, classrooms, meals, student services and cultural activities.

Faculty from U.S. institutions participating in the partnership program teach their own courses at AIFS centers throughout the world.



American Institute For Foreign Study  
9 West Broad Street  
Stamford, CT 06902-3788  
203.399.5000 • fax 399.5590  
[www.aifs.com](http://www.aifs.com)